

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 EB-08 TRSE-00 AID-05

OMB-01 /110 W

-----111340Z 124355 /45

R 111215Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9025

INFO AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, GB

SUBJECT: BONGOS RENOVATION DAY PRESS CONFERENCE SPEECH

SUMMARY: RETURNING FROM THREE WEEK TRIP TO FRANCE, US AND AFRO-- ARAB SUMMIT IN CAIRO ON MORNING OF MARCH 10, PRESIDENT BONGO CALLED MAJOR PRESS CONFERENCE FOR SAME AFTERNOON. GOG, PARTY OFFICIALS AND DIPLOMATIC CORPS WERE CONVOKED FOR WHAT DEVELOPED INTO TWO HOUR SESSION DURING WHICH BONGO SUMMED UP RESULTS OF TRIP, DELILVERED RATHER MILD RENOVATION DAY SPEECH (SPICED BY POINTED ATTACKS AGAINST SOME MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT), AND SPENT MORE THAN HOUR ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM PRESS. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT BONGO BEGAN SPEECH WITH RESUME OF THREE WEKK TRIP FEB 16 TO MARCH 10. HE PASSED LIGHTLY OVER FIRST PART OF TRAVEL IN FRANCE WHICH WAS COMBINED BUSINESS/ VACATION. PRESIDENT DID MENTION, HOWEVER, THAT INITIAL MEETING WITH FRENCH PRIM MINISTER LEFT HIM PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED
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WITH LATTERS CONCERN FOR AND GRASP OF AFRICAN PROBLEMS. BONGO ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT HIS CONVERSATION S WITH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING FEB 25 WERE FOCUSED ON AGREEMENTS FOR FENCH FINANCIALASSISTANCE FOR GABONESE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WHICH HAD BEEN REACHED DURING GISCARDS STATE VISIT TO GABON LAST AUGUST. BONGO NOTED THAT GISCARD TOTALLY CONFIRMED THESE PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS

FOR HELP.

2. NEXT STAGE OF TRIP TO US FEB 28 TO MARCH 4 WAS DESCRIBED BY BONGO AS PRIVATE BUSINESS VISIT, BUT OBVIOUS HIGHLIGHT WAS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER MARCH 3. BONGO SPOKE ENTHUSIASTICALLY OF MEETING WHICH " LASTED MORE THAN TWICE AS LONG AS SCHEDULED." TWO PRESIDENTS DISCUSSED AFRICAN ISSUES AND PARTICULARLY PROBLEMS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, ACCORDING TO BONGO, AND BOTH WERE CONCERNED WITH AVOID " ANOTHER ANGOLA" SITUATION IN ZIMBABWE". BONGO ALSO MENTIONED THERE WAS DISCUSSION OF POSSIBILITY OF FREE DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS TO CHOOSE SUCCESSORS TO SMITH REGIME. SUMMING UP US VISIT, BONGO SAID " WE CAN EXPECT A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN AMERICAN POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA IN A POSITIVE SENSE."

3. NEXT MAJOR STOP ON TRIP, AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT IN CAIRO, WAS DESCRIBED BY BONGO AS " COMPLETE SUCCESS." " ARABS HAVE DECIDED TO SHOW REAL INTEREST IN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS," HE SAID, AND SOME COUNTRIES, NOTABLY SAUDI ARABIA, HAVE BEEN GENEROUS IN PLEDGING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. IN POLITICAL ASIDE, BONGO CALLED ON AFRICANS TO BE REALISTIC IN THEIR ANALYSIS OF THIS NEW ARAB ASSISTANCE WHICH WAS "PRIMARILY FROM MUSLIM MONARCH, NOT REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENTS". THESE DONORS WOULD NEVER ACCEPT OR ENCOURAGE FOREIGN IDEOLOGY OR RADICAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENTS, ACCORDING TO BONGO. IN THINLY VEILED ATTACK ON BENIN, BONGO THEN EXPOUNDED AT LENGTH ON "ANTICS OF SOME SO CALLED REVOLUTIONARIES."

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(BONGO'S REPLY TO QUESTION FROM PRESS CONCERNING BENIN'S ALLEGATIONS OF GABONESE INVOLVEMENT IN JAN 16 MERCENARY ATTACK IS SUBJECT OF SEPTEL).

4. AT END OF PREPARED REMARKS, BONGO TURNED ATTENTION TO GABON'S INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL SITUATION ON EVE OF NINTH RENOVATION DAY CELEBRATION. HE REPEATED FAMILIAR THEMES IN CITING COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND DEPLORING LACK OF PROFESSIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS, EVEN AT HIGHEST LEVELS OF FELLOW GABONESE. PRESIDENT ADDRESSED LIVELIEST COMMENTS OF HALF HOUR SPEECH TO MINISTERS IN ATTENDANCE. IN DESCRIBING DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS OF LIBREVILLE'S STREETS, LITERALLY UNDERGOING CONSTRUCTION FROM ONE END OF CITY TO OTHER, BONGO SHOUTED THAT MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND VICE PRIME MINISTER (RESPONSIBLE FOR LABOR AFFAIRS) HAD UNTIL MARCH 31 TO SEE ALL ROAD CONSTRUCTION COMPLETED OR " LOSE THEIR JOBS."

5. COMMENT: SPEECH WAS DELIVERED IN TYPICAL BONGO FASHION

AND CONTAINED NO SURPRISES OR NEW THEMES OTHER THAN
SPECIFIC DENIALS OF BENINS ALLEGATIONS. HOWEVER,
REMARKS WERE NOTEWORTH FOR POSITIVE APPROACH TO US-
GABONESE RELATINS. ALSO, FRENCH WILL PROBABLY BREATHE
EASIER NOW THAT " RENOVATIN DAY ADDRESS" HAS BEEN GIVEN,
AND -- INCONTRAST TO LAST YEARS SPEECH-- THEY WERE
NOT SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIFIC CRITICISM THIS YEAR. STEIGMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES, MEETING REPORTS, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 11-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LIBREV00617
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770084-0744
Format: TEL
From: LIBREVILLE
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Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770369/aaaacjcl.tel
Line Count: 123
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8fceb9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3137673
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BONGOS RENOVATION DAY PRESS CONFERENCE SPEECH SUMMARY: RETURNING FROM THREE WEEK TRIP TO FRANCE, US AND AFRO-- ARAB SUMMIT IN CAIRO ON MORNING OF MAR 10
TAGS: PFOR, PDIP, GB, (BONGO, EL HADJ OMAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8fceb9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009